

# First Lady Tracey Quillen Carney: 2019 Kindergarten Registration Starts Now

**Op-ed by Tracey Quillen Carney, First Lady of Delaware  
Honorary Chair, Kindergarten Registration Campaign**

This month, we launched the first ever Kindergarten Registration Campaign in Delaware. And I can hear families asking exactly what I would have asked in the hectic preschool years of our kids' lives: "You want me to think about next fall – now?"

Of course, students won't ever be turned away from attending their feeder pattern school. But families should know that kindergarten registration is not a one-step process, and there are advantages and opportunities that come with starting early—opportunities that can help give children the best possible start to the school year. A good start to kindergarten helps set kids on a path to future success, including the all-important benchmark of grade-level reading.

So yes, speaking to my fellow parents/caregivers, now really is the best time to start planning for next fall, and our schools are eager to help. We can help each other, too, by spreading the word and encouraging all parents/caregivers of children who will be age five by August 31, 2019, to learn about and complete kindergarten registration as early as possible.

First, families need to identify your home schools, even if you plan to look into choice or charter options, and learn exactly what each school requires for registration. No one should be wary of the documents requested; schools will work with all Delaware residents in consideration of family circumstances. But recognize that you might need time to make

physical exam appointments and gather materials. Each school also has a number of forms for families to complete, and it's worth finding out early if you—or your family members, neighbors, or friends with rising K students—are going to need any help or additional information.

You also want to ask about kindergarten registration events, which are already underway at some schools and will continue into the spring. Most districts host both day and evening events—some even have “kindergarten registration weeks”—not only to offer help with forms, but also to get to know your child and your family. Early registration maximizes opportunities to build a sense of connection to the school community, with the adults who will work with your child and with other families who will be starting K along with yours.

In addition, at registration events and appointments, schools are able to share information about learning activities and opportunities that are available before the start of kindergarten—including a variety of spring/summer programs and free online materials, like those at [ReadingBrightStart.org](https://www.ReadingBrightStart.org) and [delawarereadinessteam.com](https://www.delawarereadinessteam.com).

We have 28 districts and charters that offer kindergarten in Delaware. Each has its own schedule of registration events. Along with the Delaware Department of Education, school districts are working hard to make the registration process as easy as possible. But it just doesn't make sense to leave registration until late spring or summer, as many families currently do. It deprives you of opportunities to help children to be ready on day one of kindergarten, and it impedes our schools' ability to plan with precision for incoming K classes.

For families who want to explore choice/charter options, remember that you must register in your “home school” first and then complete the choice/charter process, as well. There is not an official deadline for choice requests, but keep in

mind that the first lottery selections for choice spots are in early January. Again, whatever your plans, starting the registration process now just makes sense.

In a recent survey conducted by the Delaware Readiness Teams—community-based teams of early childhood specialists and early learning providers, district and school staff, teachers, parents, and neighbors—76% of parents/caregivers described the kindergarten registration process as “hard” or “extremely hard.” For those who completed the survey in Spanish, 98% said the registration process was hard or extremely hard. The sooner families learn about kindergarten registration, the more support they can get in addressing any questions.

The Delaware Readiness Teams have compiled “Get Ready for Kindergarten” packets, which have been available at special events this month and have been distributed to many libraries and pediatric/family practice offices, as well as to early childhood education providers, throughout our State. To request a packet—or to learn more in support of your family, friends, and neighbors—please email [delawarereadinessteams@gmail.com](mailto:delawarereadinessteams@gmail.com).

When it comes to promoting school readiness and the future of our children—all of Delaware’s children—we are in this together. Thank you to everyone who is a part of Delaware’s Kindergarten Registration Campaign.